

Preface

For more than three decades, the State Historic Preservation Office in the Division of Historical Resources (formerly Division of Archives and History) has conducted North Carolina's statewide architectural survey program. The Preservation Office has sponsored and co-sponsored, assisted and guided dozens of local and regional architectural surveys throughout the state--all part of the statewide program whose mission is to identify, record, and encourage the preservation of North Carolina's rich and varied historic and architectural heritage.

For each community and county, as for the state and nation as a whole, creating a photographic and written record of historic places is the first, crucial step in recognizing, valuing, and preserving the heritage of the past for the benefit of the present and the future. Each survey project provides a local base of information about community history and architecture. Ideally the surveyor and the survey serve as a prism--gathering information from many different residents and many different places, then reflecting that knowledge back to the community in a way that offers residents and others new understanding of the whole and its parts.

The bedrock of preservation planning and actions, a thorough local survey forms the basis for many preservation decisions. Survey reports, files, and maps are maintained as a permanent record that permits evaluation of properties for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, consideration of impacts of government funded or licensed projects on historic properties, designation and protection of local districts and properties by local preservation commissions, and private investment in rehabilitation of historic buildings for new uses. Over the years, architectural surveys in town after town and county after county have provided the first step toward preservation success stories--directing new attention to familiar sights and encouraging citizens to rescue long neglected houses, rejuvenate traditional neighborhoods, and focus new investment in the economy and quality of life in historic town centers.

As of 2008, county surveys have been completed in 69 of the state's 100 counties, and regional overview surveys have recorded selected properties in an additional 26 counties. Four metropolitan counties have completed or are in the process of conducting comprehensive survey updates. Municipal surveys have been completed in about 65 communities. Several thematic surveys encompass specific types of places statewide, such as truss bridges and county courthouses.

Cumulatively, the statewide series of local surveys compose an important record of North Carolina's historic architecture. Survey files, organized by county, are maintained at the State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh and at the regional offices of Archives and History, along with survey project reports and detailed maps showing the locations of every recorded property. The survey data base is organized by county, site number, and property name. Photographic negatives (from surveys begun prior to 2007) and digital photograph files are curated separately in the Archives and Records Section of the Division of Historical Resources. Since 2006, the State Historic Preservation Office has been working with local governments to enter surveyed properties in local and state geographic information systems. The extensive collection of survey files, databases, maps, photographs, and reports constitutes a research and reference source on the state's architecture and history while providing private citizens, preservation organizations, and government agencies with a guide to the historic places that merit recognition and protection.